



# Action Strategy for *Housing*

*CITY OF MANCHESTER, NH*

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Most signs are clearly visible. The signs of new life and new business in the Millyard. The signs of neighborhoods coming back from abandonment. The signs of new development along South Willow Street. The signs of a top notch arena and growing airport. The signs of a new multi-cultural diversity. The signs of expanding educational institutions. These are signs that the City of Manchester is in a revitalization mode with a strong diversified economic base, great neighborhoods and improving public facilities.

Less obvious, but equally important, are the signs of a crisis in housing. The strong economy, coupled with limited production of housing, has led to the tightest housing market in a generation. Rents increasing faster than incomes, homelessness, difficulty in finding a single family home, families doubling up and tripling up in units and young adults moving back to their parents homes are all indicators of just how difficult the housing market currently is. To make matters worse, rapidly rising rents and difficulties in finding any units hits hardest on those families least able to afford it. Recognizing that an adequate supply of housing at affordable rates for all income levels is critical to providing shelter to all residents of the City and to continue the economic expansion, the Mayor convened a Housing Task Force to develop an Action Strategy for Manchester.

This report is the culmination of the efforts of the Task Force which included a major conference on Housing held at UNH Manchester in the summer of last year. Included are recommendations on action strategies which the City and other housing organizations could implement to improve the housing situation in Manchester. These strategies are organized into five major categories of action: Planning & Coordination, Regulatory improvements, Education & Advocacy, Incentives & Financing and City Policy. The Appendices include a selection of key information and a summary of the Housing Conference.

# *I*ntroduction



*Millyard Renaissance*



# Planning & Coordination

There should be an improvement in the coordination of existing information on housing created by a number of City, State and federal agencies and non-profit organizations. Additional information may be required in the following areas:

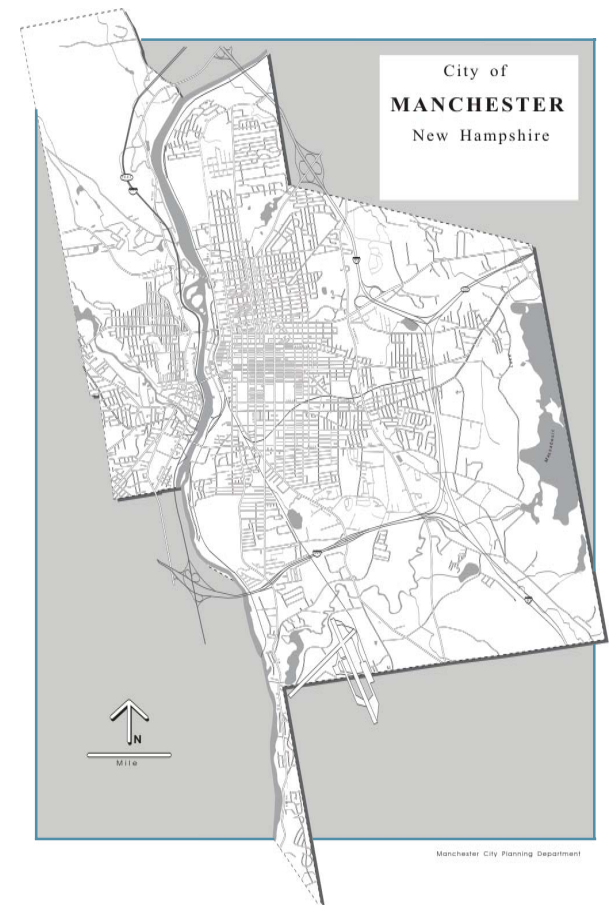
## Coordination of Information

- Needs of businesses for housing to meet expanding needs of their workforce and the impacts of inadequate housing on the ability of the City to expand the economic base.
- Information on homeless populations and families living in overcrowded situations.

## Inventory of Opportunities for Housing

- Develop an inventory of vacant buildings that could be used for housing.
- Inventory existing city-owned land and buildings that might be suitable for housing development and give high priority to such use through public/private partnerships.
- Determine whether non-profit organizations such as churches have surplus properties that could be converted into affordable housing.

*The efforts of various housing agencies and providers can be enhanced with good coordination and collaborative planning.*



# Regulatory

*Government regulation of housing is intended to promote the public health, safety and welfare. These regulations may also, however, have the unintended impact of limiting housing supply, which may in turn impact the costs of housing and the community's economic viability.*



*Hanover Street Housing*

## Building and Fire Codes

Uniform building codes, which are primarily geared to new construction, can be difficult to meet when rehabbing existing buildings into housing.

- Given Manchester's large stock of older buildings, many of which have vacant upper stories, it would be advantageous to develop a code system that is specific to existing buildings. This would likely take changes at the State level to adopt a code system similar to that in New Jersey.
- In certain cases, applying for a building permit for a portion of a building triggers need to comply with codes for the entire building, making the limited upgrade infeasible. Review the standards that trigger full building compliance to determine their need.
- Insure that departments regulating development review and approve plans prior to the development phase rather than near completion when changes can be costly and affect the timing of opening of the units.

## **Zoning Ordinance**

- Consider reducing parking requirements for high-density residential areas and mixed-use areas.
- Encourage mixed-use projects with housing and commercial as well as adaptive reuse of underutilized, non-residential buildings for housing use.
- Determine whether there may be any areas of the City suitable for increases in housing density or flexibility in housing types.  
Consideration could be given to developing special overlay zones and/or reducing setbacks to increase the number of units.

## **Regulatory Coordination**

- Have departments involved in development regulation meet on a quarterly basis to insure that procedures are coordinated and regulations and requirements are not contradictory.
- Consider having all departments and land use boards meet on an annual basis to review the same issues.



*Mill Restoration - Lowell, MA*

# Education & Advocacy

*Providing information to the public and specific groups on the critical issues of housing is a prime need. A consistent commitment to housing with flexible policies and strategies are necessary to meet the cyclical demands for housing. Without a strong voice for housing, other issues such as the fear of more students in the school system due to development tend to become the primary focus of debate during review of applications.*

## **Outreach Education**

- Insure that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen has up-to-date and regular information on the issues of housing and the potential impact of decision-making on housing supply.
- Provide media with regular information on housing needs and the impact on individuals and families. Promote the concept of housing programs on the community access station.
- Educate the legislative delegation as to the importance of adequate and safe housing.
- Work with the faith community to explain the need for housing programs and seek their active involvement.
- Hold training and discussion sessions with City Departments and Boards involved in the review of housing applications.
- Seek involvement of colleges in the area to ascertain their needs as well as their willingness to research and react to the issue of affordable housing.
- Work with the School district, Parent Teacher Organizations and other educational institutions to understand the need for housing and the impact of opposition to housing projects.



## Advocacy

- Identify volunteer speakers to counteract NIMBY campaigns against new housing projects.
- Establish a Manchester Regional Housing Coalition to advocate for housing needs. The Coalition should annually hold a housing summit to promote the development of housing in general and the need for affordable housing. The Coalition or a subcommittee of the group should also focus on emergency housing and transitional housing issues.
- Have the City promote the need for various housing projects in the City. A “housing ombudsman” would be an example of how the City could advocate for increased housing opportunities.
- The Board of Mayor and Aldermen should support or introduce legislation at the State that will address housing issues within the City. Generally, the Board can play a major role in supporting housing productions.



*Transitional Housing - Market Street*



*The Meeting House - Senior Living Facility*

# Incentive & Financing

*The shortage of housing requires selective financial incentives to insure adequate affordable housing.*

## **Increased Funding for Housing**

- Additional amounts of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds should be used for affordable housing.
- Additional operating support to non-profit housing organizations will allow additional affordable housing and services.
- Establish a new “Housing Trust Fund”. Funds could come from not only the City and Federal government, but also area employers and financial institutions. Private funds in particular could be used for insuring an adequate information and advocacy program.
- Consider the development of an “Acquisition Fund” for quick turnaround acquisition of properties for housing production.
- During times of very tight housing markets, shift funding to insure adequate emergency shelter and transitional housing opportunities.
- Advocate for additional State support for housing initiatives and funding.

## Incentives for Housing

- Utilize HOME funds for home ownership opportunities and include provisions that will insure long term affordability of these units.
- Explore whether City policy or capital construction could be utilized to encourage portions of private housing projects to be “affordable”. Consideration could be given to providing density bonuses under the zoning ordinance for approved affordable housing projects.
- Consider alternative options and methods of providing housing opportunities such as allowing senior citizens to remain in their homes.



*Townhouses - Burlington, VT*



*Cedar Street Housing Before ...*



*...And After*

# City Policy

*The city of Manchester, through both its programs and regulatory activities, will promote the creation of an adequate and balanced supply of housing for the city's residents at all income levels. This will include actions designed to ensure the availability of an adequate housing stock to support and sustain existing and new economic activity as well as ensuring that the housing needs of low-income families and seniors are met.*

## **Overall Policy**

It should be the City's overall policy to support a balanced housing market that provides opportunities for all City residents ranging from upscale market rate housing to affordable housing. Maintaining a balanced and adequate housing supply supports the business community by allowing room for expansion of jobs and supports the residents by offering options from homeownership to rental housing at costs that are not volatile.

## **Policy on Use of Housing Funds**

- Provide flexibility in funding various housing programs depending on the current housing market issues. During periods of overproduction, housing funds should be more focused on improving existing housing conditions such as rehab loan program while during tight markets, funding should be geared towards new production.
- Provide support to non-profit housing providers to insure a continuity through various housing cycles.
- Utilize HOME funds for home ownership opportunities and include provisions that will insure long term affordability of these units.
- Insure adequate staff to administer housing programs and projects.

### **Policy on City Planning and Regulation**

- Encourage mixed-use projects that combine commercial with residential components.
- Identify housing opportunities in areas where the City is developing major planning and redevelopment programs.
- Support the development of housing in the Amoskeag Millyard and the Central Business District.
- Consider increasing allowed housing densities (under zoning) along the river.

### **Policy on Surplus City Property**

Utilize surplus City property to sell to developers or non-profit organizations for the purpose of developing housing.

### **Policy on City Development Projects**

The City should replace or have replaced, any dwelling units it has removed for a public project. [Except in times of “Overproduction”].



*Higher Density Housing - Burlington, VT*

# City Policy Continued



*Parking Policy and Pricing Affect Housing*

## Monitoring of Housing Stock

- Establish what will be considered a healthy vacancy rate. Normally, this would be on the order of 4-6%.
- Establish what will be considered an appropriate annual production rate.

## Parking Policy

- Offer significantly reduced cost of monthly parking in garages and lots for downtown housing. Most residents in the downtown use parking primarily at night which could add to revenues, and encourage downtown housing without significantly adding to the peak hour parking demand which occurs during mid-day.
- Continue with street parking permits for residents.







# *Appendices*

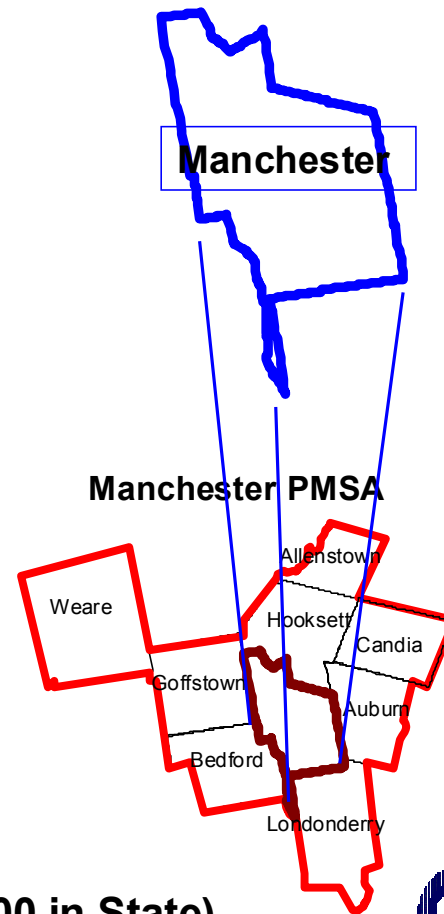
## Selected Statistics On Housing Workshop Executive Summary



# *Selected Statistics on Housing*

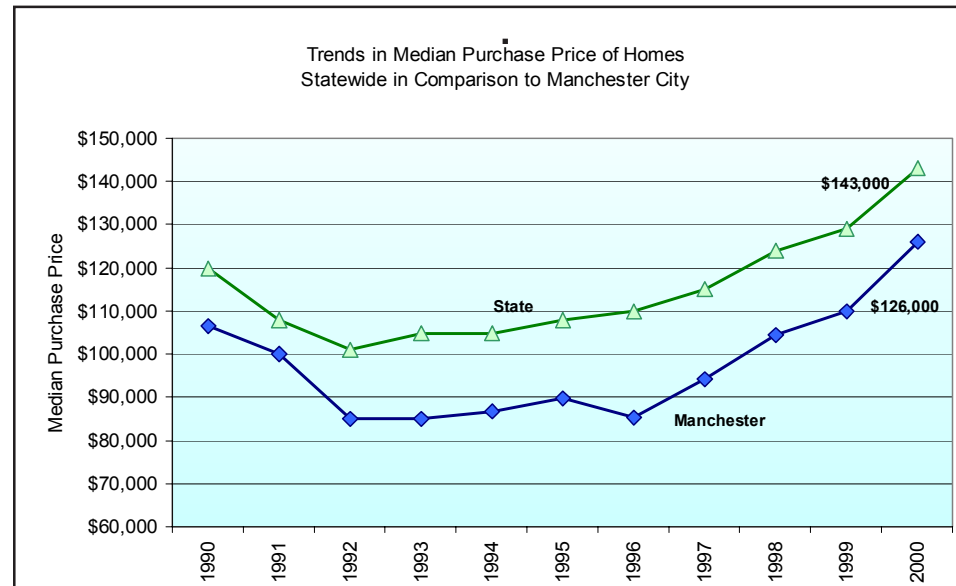
## Housing Overview

	City	PMSA
<b>Population</b>	<b>107,006</b>	<b>198,378</b>
<b>%Change '90-'00</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Occupied Housing</b>	<b>44,247</b>	<b>75,368</b>
<b>%Change '90-'00</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Owner</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>Renter</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Assisted Units</b>	<b>2860</b>	<b>3320 (17,300 in State)</b>

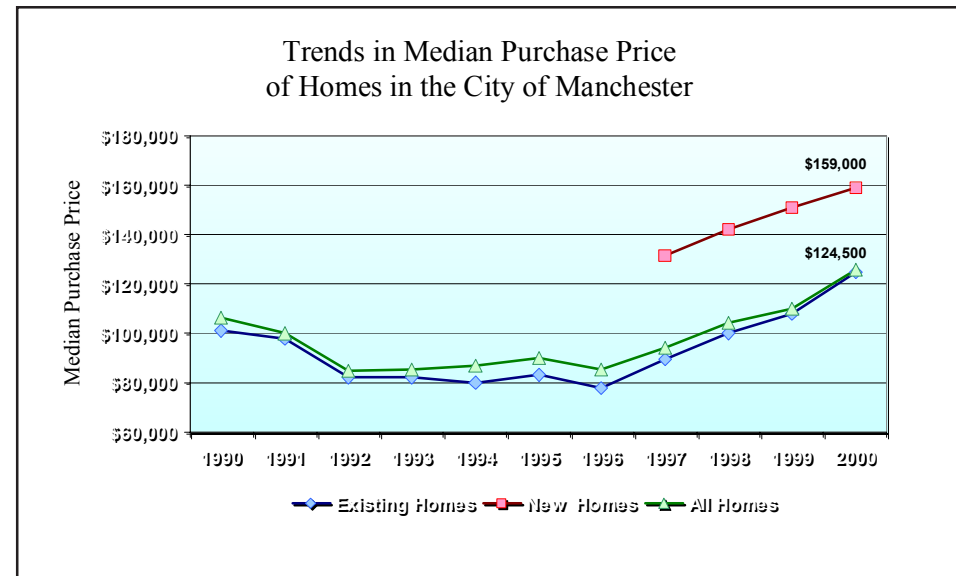


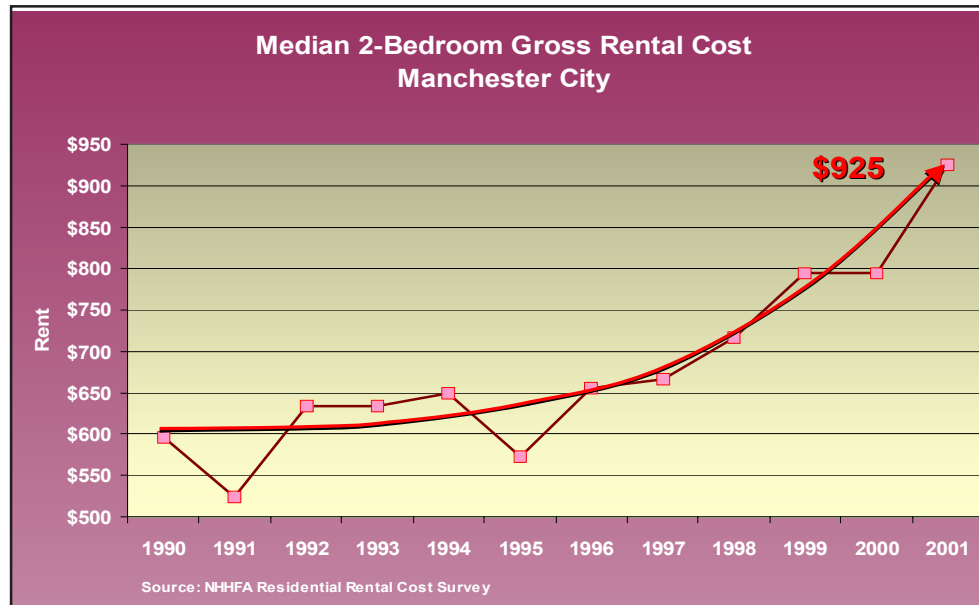
Project based units only. Does not include all units occupied by Section 8 Voucher holders.

*Trends in Median Purchase Price of Homes Statewide in Comparison to Manchester City*

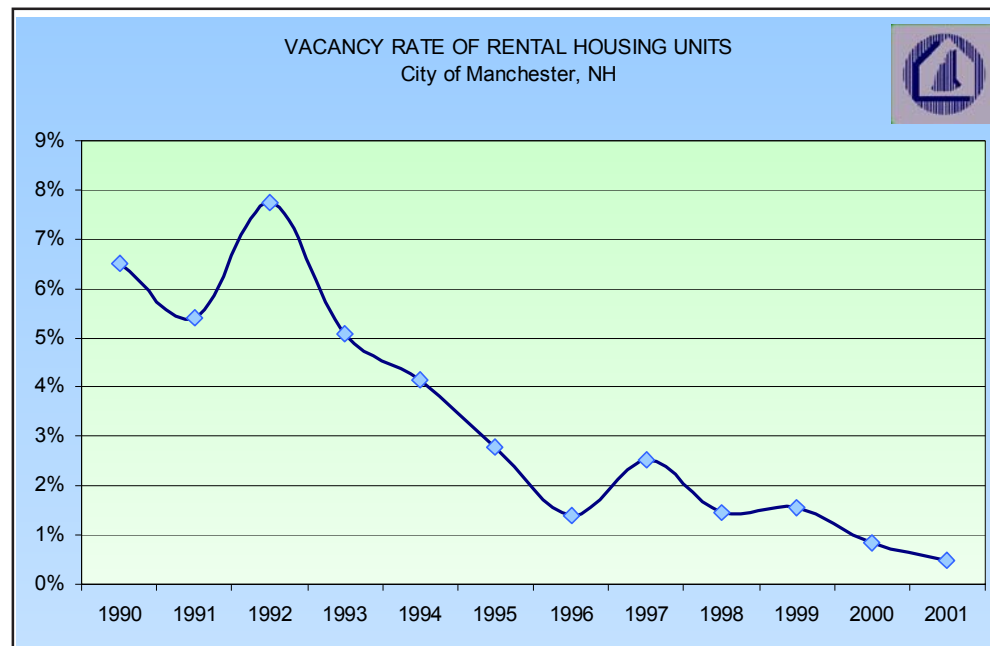


*Trends in Median Purchase Price of Homes in the City of Manchester*



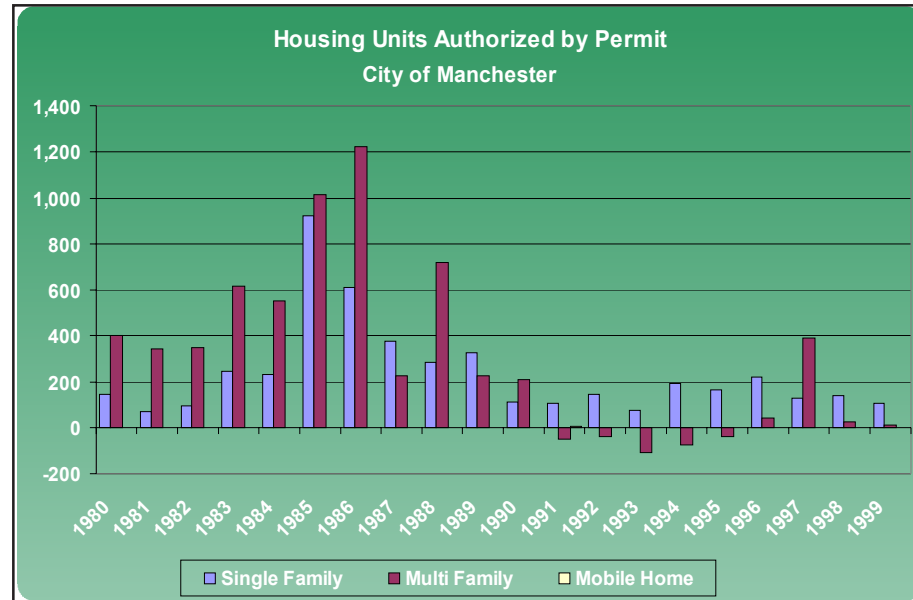


*Median 2-Bedroom  
Gross Rental Cost  
City of Manchester*

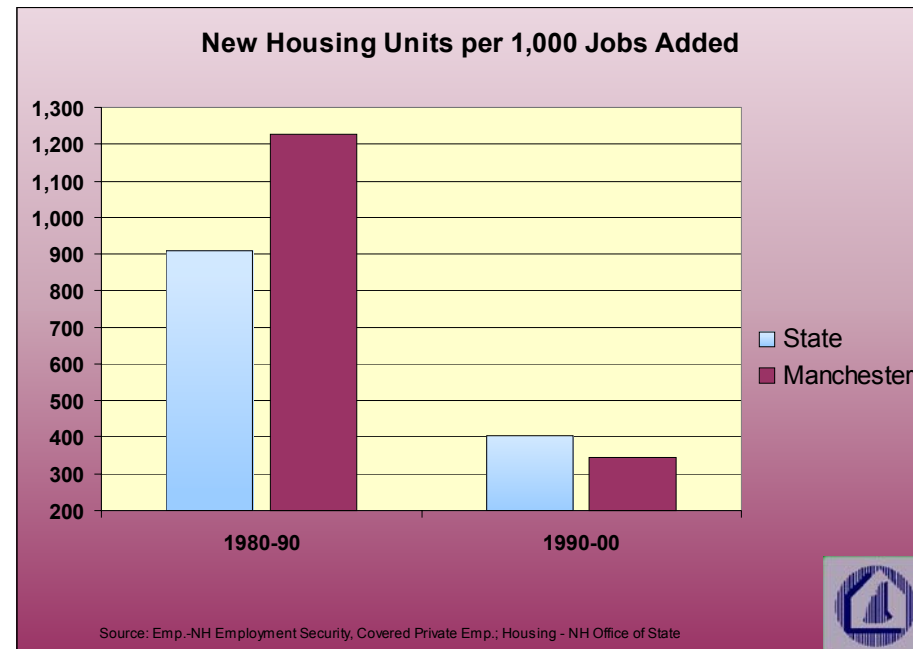


*Vacancy Rate of  
Rental Housing Units  
City of Manchester*

*Housing Units Authorized  
by Permit  
City of Manchester*



*New Housing Units per  
1,000 Jobs Added  
City of Manchester*



# Workshop Executive Summary

## Planning the Event

*Recognizing the importance of developing an action agenda to begin to address the various issues relating to the housing crisis in Manchester, The Housing Task Force worked with Joyce Palmer, a local consultant, to develop an interactive one day planning session. The anticipated outcome for the day was the development of a preliminary plan, which would guide the efforts of The Housing Task Force and the City in moving forward with this complex issue. After several planning sessions the following format was agreed to:*

### **Opening Educational Session to**

- Share expectations for the day
- Provide information on the Housing Crisis In Manchester
- Establish work groups

### **Work Sessions In 4 Key areas**

- Encouraging New Construction
- Encouraging Adaptive Reuse for Housing
- Supporting “Affordable Housing” Initiatives
- Extending the Safety Net to those least able to afford rising housing costs

Report Session to outline the action priorities established in each area

2<sup>nd</sup> Work Session to specify action steps and timeline for identified priorities

Synthesis of a preliminary plan

## The Event

Three educational presentations were made after the introductory session:

- Information on the housing crisis from a statewide and local perspective by William Ray of The New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority
- Information on how the current situation developed and what influences we would be contending with in the future by Robert MacKenzie, Director of Manchester's Planning Department
- Information on how the current situation was affecting families and shared additional statistics to demonstrate the wide spread impact of this situation in our community by Joyce Palmer, Workshop Facilitator

During the reporting out of priorities (which are listed below) it became clear that there were many overlapping concerns between the groups. Therefore the afternoon action planning sessions were identified as:

- Developing a City Housing Policy
- Implementing a City-wide Study to Locate and Evaluate Sites for Potential Use and/or Reuse
- Extending the Safety Net
- Regulations/Incentives/ Subsidy/ Financial Disincentives
- Education and Advocacy

*The workshop was held on August 8, 2001 at UNH Manchester. 67 people attended the workshop. Participants included developers, builders, architects, realtors, staff from various city departments, business representatives, bankers, foundation staff, housing agency staff, housing advocates, and service providers.*

*Because of the number of people 5 work sessions were held in the 4 key areas. In order to provide a wide range of perspectives in each group, participants were randomly assigned in advance. These groups were all approximately the same size, having 12 to 15 in each. Volunteers recruited by the Housing Task Force facilitated these groups.*

*The final session consisted of sharing the outlined action plans for each area and consolidating these actions into a preliminary timeline for the Task Force to Review. In closing the event Mayor Baines shared his appreciation for the effort put into the planning sessions and clearly stated that the work completed in this session would lay the foundation for the future work on this important issue.*

*Following is the listing of the identified priorities from the 5 work sessions.*

*The Categories*

*Extending the safety net*

*Supporting affordable housing initiatives*

*New Construction*

*Adaptive use and reuse*

### **Extending The Safety Net**

- Provision of More Transitional Housing/Emergency Units
- Development of More Permanent Housing
- Landlord and Tenant Communication
- Continuum of Care Expansion to improve communication and awareness
- Living Wage questions /Business Involvement in Solutions
- Regional Approach

### **Supporting Affordable Housing Initiatives**

- Land/Housing Inventory (Including Zoning Impediments)
- Pro-Active City Housing Policy
- Stakeholder Task Force on Housing to advocate policy at the grassroots and legislative level; this must include identifying who is the “go to” person.

### **New Construction**

- Political Courage (local, state and regionally) and leadership to educate (challenge if necessary) neighbors opposed to affordable housing
- Developing social responsibility
- 40B in NH to promote a regional approach
- Statewide structure that adequately funds education
- Creative/Inclusionary zoning with density bonuses
- COMPREHENSIVE planning at the local, regional, and state level
- Keep what we have (priority added during the large group session)



## **Adaptive Use and Reuse**

- Regulations/Zoning Issues/Building Codes
- City Study of all areas with potential for redevelopment/adaptive reuse
- (Essential not to neglect smaller projects in the neighborhoods)
- City needs to decide that housing is an issue that it wants to address. If so, must develop housing policy and action plan that is:
  - Deliberate
  - Intentional
  - Linked to impacts in business and education
  - Contains a clear mission and complete vision
  - Community Based
  - Outlines a PR/Education Campaign to develop awareness
  - Code Requirements that are flexible enough for Adaptive ReUse (must include Fire Department in these discussions)
  - Incentives
  - Money
  - Density
  - Zoning
  - Linking Affordable Housing to Something Else
  - Fast Track Approval
  - Create Parking Alternatives
  - Education and Advocacy